

# Teacher Guide

## Background and Drill

Drill students on the gods that they know already from “The Friends and Foes of Homer’s *Iliad*.”

Students do not need to know the loyalties at this point. Instead they should understand that some remain, and some loyalties have changed. There are two gods who are most prominent in this epic: **Poseidon** and **Athene**. The fact to remember throughout the work is that Athene loves and aids Odysseus in any way she can, while Poseidon wants to put Odysseus through a meat grinder. The reason for Poseidon’s anger is explained in the first chapter, though the macabre details are saved for Odysseus’ narration in Book 9.

Notice that the Essay/Assignment is meant to be completed at the beginning of class once the class has read Homer’s introductory plea for the Muse’s inspiration in the first paragraph. This follows the same model as the essay assignment at the beginning (and end) of the *Iliad*.

The *Odyssey* **does not** pick up where the *Iliad* left off. The *Iliad* ends with the ongoing Trojan War in its tenth and final year. The *Odyssey* begins with the ongoing journey of Odysseus to Ithaca in its tenth and final year. The *Odyssey* does introduce questions about the fate of Odysseus which are not answered (this is true mainly for the fate which the dead prophet Teiresias tells Odysseus about in the Underworld—his predicted wanderings AFTER killing the suitors); however, this epic probably reads more like the type of narrative whole that modern readers are accustomed to than the *Iliad* does.

The most surprising literary decision of Homer is the absence of Odysseus. He will not show up in the *Odyssey* until Book 5, where we will find him crying on the seashore on the far-flung island Ogygia.

## Discussion Help

Today’s discussion is an opinion question. It is good to notice, though, that the first four books of the *Odyssey* are filled with generous references to Odysseus. It certainly serves to build the anticipation around his now-imminent return. In fact, the hearer is persuaded by Homer that Odysseus can and will rectify all the injustices which have transpired in his twenty years of absence.

## BOOK 1: THAT INGENIOUS HERO

### Identify Places and Characters:

Hyperion	the sun god; a Titan sometimes referred to as Helios
Calypso	daughter of Atlas; nymph on the island of Ogygia
Aegisthus	(ay-gis-thus) a cousin to Agamemnon who killed him in Argos with Clytemnestra’s help
Orestes	(ohr-es-teez) son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra; killed Aegisthus and his mother to avenge his father’s death
Atlas	Titan father of Calypso; holds columns to separate the sky from the earth
Polyphemus	(pah-luh-fee-muhz) king of the Cyclopes; son of Poseidon and Thoosa; blinded by Odysseus
Dulichium, Same, & Zacynthus	neighboring islands to Ithaca under the rule of Odysseus
Antinous	(an-ti-no-uhs) son of Eupheides; Ithacan leader of the suitors; suitor Penelope hates most
Eurymachus	son of Polybus; a leading suitor and Ithacan

### Comprehension Questions:

1. Which god harbored resentment against Odysseus, preventing him from returning home? Why was this god so furious? Poseidon was angry because Odysseus had blinded his son, the king of the Cyclopes, Polyphemus.
2. Odysseus’ son, Telemachus, was visited by Athene. What disguise did this visitor take? Why? Athene disguised herself as Mentos, king of the Taphians. Odysseus’ father, Laertes, and Mentos’ father, Anchialus, had been friends.
3. Who sang and played the lyre for the rowdy crowd of suitors in the house of Odysseus? Phemius, the son of Terpes, was the reluctant musician for the suitors.
4. Why did the disguised visitor say, “You are too old to plead infancy any longer; have you not heard how people are singing Orestes’ praises for having killed his father’s murderer, Aegisthus? You are a fine, smart-looking fellow; show your mettle, then, and make yourself a name in story?” Athene wanted to motivate Telemachus to stand up to the suitors, if necessary, and thus gave him this example of Orestes.

## Questions to Mark for Test:

Students should mark the following items in their study guides, which they will be responsible for on their test (Remind students to clearly circle the ID, Question #, and Quotation bullet point):

### Identifications:

Hyperion; Calypso; Orestes;  
Polyphemus; Antinous; Eurymachus

### Comprehension Questions:

Numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

(*Test Note: Students should study Questions 3, 7, and 8 as Identifications; they should know how to spell these and be able to give them as answers in the first section of their test.*)

### Quotations:

“Tell me ... of that ingenious hero ...”

— Homer to the Muse

“If Odysseus is the man ...”

— Athene disguised as  
Mentes to Telemachus

## Teacher Notes

**Memorization Note:** Students are to memorize the opening lines of the *Odyssey*. You will need to assign a date when this assignment is due. It is best to give the students a couple of weeks to work on this, with weekly reminders of the upcoming date that they will be required to recite it.

**Resource Note:** Samuel Butler’s translation of the *Odyssey* has an excellent introductory

list of all the important characters and places in the epic. He helpfully divides character by type or place. It might be good to have students study these for a quiz or to print them for students to keep for reference in their notebooks. Many (but not all) of them will be covered in the study guide.

Shipping terms are also covered in the Appendix in the back of this guide. It is meant to serve as a go-to when you are trying to understand some reference during the sailing adventures.

## Essays and Assignments

Have all students compare the introductory lines of the *Iliad* to those of the *Odyssey*. Have them write a page anticipating what the differences will be between the two epics. This can be formulated similarly to the summary assignment at the beginning of the *Iliad*. Anticipation is a good (though not essential) help to getting into an epic. Assign this essay IMMEDIATELY upon reading the first paragraph of the work. As before, collect the assignments when completed to be passed out upon writing a similar essay at the end of the *Odyssey*.

5. What specific instructions did the disguised visitor give to Telemachus? Athene told Telemachus to call the Achaeans in assembly and bid the suitors leave, sending Penelope back to her father, if needed. Then Telemachus should go in quest of his father to Nestor at Pylos and Menelaus at Sparta. If his father was alive, he should wait twelve months. If he was dead, he should build a barrow for him. Either way, he should plan on killing the suitors.

6. Antinous said, “The gods seem to have given you a lesson in bluster and tall talking.” To whom was he saying this? Why? Antinous said this to Telemachus because he had challenged the suitors openly and demanded that they leave his house.

7. Who was Euryclea? Euryclea was Odysseus’ childhood nurse who still served in his house.

8. Who was Laertes? Laertes was the father of Odysseus and former king of Ithaca.

\*Teacher Note: Have students memorize the opening lines of the *Odyssey*. See Teacher Notes in Book 3.

### Quotations:

• “Tell me, O Muse, of that ingenious hero who traveled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but do what he might he could not have his men, for they perished through their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things, O daughter of Zeus, from whatsoever source you may know them.”  
— Homer’s appeal to the Muse

• “If Odysseus is the man he then was, these suitors will have a short shrift and a sorry wedding.”  
— Athene disguised as Mentes to Telemachus

• “But there! It rests with heaven to determine whether he is to return, and take his revenge in his own house or no; I would, however, urge you to set about trying to get rid of these suitors at once.”  
— Athene as Mentes

• “You are a fine, smart-looking fellow; show your mettle, then, and make yourself a name in story.”  
— Athene as Mentes

### Discussion Questions:

1. The *Odyssey* begins with Telemachus, not Odysseus. In your opinion, why is this?

# Teacher Guide

## Background and Drill

Drill students on the Identifications, Comprehension Questions, and Quotations from Book 1.

It is very clear from the outset that Telemachus has a strained relationship with his father. The main problem for Telemachus is that he has no memory of his father, as he was an infant when Odysseus left for Troy. When speaking of Odysseus to Athene/Mentes in Book 1, Telemachus says, “my mother tells me I am son to Odysseus,” and again refers to him as “he who they tell me is my father.” The speech in Book 2 is a telling addition to this vein of thought. In his speech to the Ithacans, Telemachus says that yes, he has lost his father, but more importantly, he is besieged by suitors who eat up his inheritance and pester his mother to marry.

## Discussion Help

### Similarities:

- Diomed notes that Athene favors Odysseus when he chooses him for the spying mission against the Trojans. Odysseus is still Athene’s favorite, as she openly declares to her father, Zeus. Moreover, Athene is willing to do all the footwork necessary to bring Odysseus back from his desert island with the witch-goddess Calypso. She defies even Poseidon for her Odysseus.
- Telemachus’ speech before the elders of Ithaca is highly reminiscent of the speeches of various leaders before the Achaeans at Troy.
- Athene’s words in the guise of Mentor are highly characteristic of Homer’s emphasis on the decline over time. Old men, at least, think that young men are worse than their fathers. “Young men’s minds are light as air.”

### Differences:

- The story has in some ways shrunk in scope, as it is now primarily concerned with the fate of one man, Odysseus, and, to a lesser degree, the fate of his household.
- The *Iliad* is about a city besieged. The *Odyssey* is about a family besieged.
- The *Iliad* is about an ongoing war. The *Odyssey* is about the long journey home.
- Telemachus’ speech before the elders sets up a young man pleading with and instructing his elders, something very rare in the *Iliad*, especially for one who is unproven like Telemachus.

## BOOK 2: TELEMACHUS ACTS

### Identify Places and Characters:

Antiphus	son of Aegyptius; eaten by the Cyclops; Aegyptius suspects that he is dead
Icarius	father of Penelope; brother of Tynareus; uncle of Helen and Clytemnestra
Tyro	Neleus’ mother by Poseidon; Nestor’s grandmother; seen in Hades (Book 11)
Alcmena	granddaughter of Perseus; mortal mother of Heracles by Zeus
Mycene	legendary mother of Argus; Hera’s giant; Mycenae gets its name from her
Noemon	son of Phronius who lends his ship to Telemachus for the voyage to Pylus

### Comprehension Questions:

1. Telemachus identified two great misfortunes that had fallen upon his house. What were they?  
Telemachus had lost his father, and more importantly, the suitors were pestering his mother, Penelope, to marry against her will and eating up his estate.
2. After Telemachus made his speech to the suitors, Antinous chided him. What was this suitor’s argument for remaining in Odysseus’ house? Antinous argued that Penelope had encouraged the suitors with deceitful notes and deeds, promising to marry one of them. Thus the suitors would stay until she and her father chose one of them.
3. Identify four reasons that Telemachus could not force his mother to remarry. Telemachus argued that his father was abroad and they did not know if he was alive or dead. Icarius would force Telemachus to pay a large sum to return his mother. Heaven would punish him when his mother called on the Furies to avenge her. Also it would not be a praiseworthy thing to do.
4. Who was Halitherses? What did he specifically tell the suitors? Halitherses was an old friend of Odysseus and the best prophet in Ithaca. He had predicted the fate of Odysseus before he left for Troy. He told the suitors that he saw mischief brewing for them. Odysseus would be home soon to deal out death to many of them. Halitherses counseled them to end their wickedness now.

5. Were Telemachus to discover that his father was still alive, how long would he put up with the suitors' misbehaving and waste? \_\_\_\_\_  
Telemachus would put up with them for twelve months.
6. Who was Mentor? With which men in Ithaca was he most angry? Mentor was a friend of Odysseus who had been placed as steward in charge of Odysseus' household. He was most angry with those who were not suitors, but who sat by and let the suitors eat up Odysseus' estate.
7. Poison was produced in Ephyra, the location of the oracle of the dead.
8. At the end of Book 2, Telemachus sailed toward Pylos and Sparta.

### Quotations:

- "The sons of all the chief men among you are pestering my mother to marry them against her will. They are afraid to go to her father Icarus, asking him to choose the one he likes best, and to provide marriage gifts for his daughter, but day by day they keep hanging about my father's house, sacrificing our oxen, sheep, and fat goats for their banquets, and never giving so much as a thought to the quantity of wine they drink. No estate can stand such recklessness. We have now no Odysseus to ward off harm from our doors, and I cannot hold my own against them. I shall never all my days be as good a man as he was; still I would indeed defend myself if I had power to do so, for I cannot stand such treatment any longer; my house is being disgraced and ruined. Have respect, therefore, to your own consciences and to public opinion. Fear, too, the wrath of heaven, lest the gods should be displeased and turn upon you. I pray you by Zeus and Themis, who is the beginning and the end of councils, do not hold back, my friends, and leave me singlehanded – unless it be that my brave father Odysseus did some wrong to the Achaeans which you would now avenge on me, by aiding and abetting these suitors. Moreover, if I am to be eaten out of house and home at all, I had rather you did the eating yourselves, for I could then take action against you to some purpose, and serve you with notices from house to house till I got paid in full, whereas now I have no remedy."  
With this Telemachus dashed his staff to the ground and burst into tears. Everyone was very sorry for him, but they all sat still and no one ventured to make him an angry answer, save only Antinous ...  
– Telemachus to the assembled Achaeans
- "Sons are seldom as good men as their fathers; they are generally worse, not better."  
– Athene disguised as Mentor to Telemachus

### Discussion Questions:

1. What similarities between the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have you noticed so far? Differences?

## Questions to Mark for Test:

Students should mark the following items in their study guides, which they will be responsible for on their test (Remind students to clearly circle the ID, Question #, and Quotation bullet point):

### Identifications:

Icarus

### Comprehension Questions:

Numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8

### Quotations:

"Sons are seldom ..."

— Athene disguised as Mentor to Telemachus

## Teacher Notes

**Test Note:** Remind students of the timing of the *Odyssey* tests. There will be a test over the highlighted material from Books 1-10. The next test will include all material on the previous test AND all the new highlighted material from Books 11-18. The *Odyssey* final exam will include all material on the Books 1-18 test and the highlighted material from Books 19-24.

Remind students that there will be periodic pop quizzes on the new highlighted material from the *Odyssey*. This **WILL NOT** include information from the *Iliad*. The *Iliad* exam finished that portion of the course.

Remind students that their memory assignment can be quizzed on any day from this point forward. If students are absent on the day it is assigned, they will complete it on their first day back to school.

## Essays and Assignments

**Memory Assignment:** Remind students to be working on the upcoming memory assignment from Book 1.

**Essay:** Have students write an essay defending the actions of Telemachus. Why are Telemachus' actions the best possible in his situation? In what ways are his insecurities merely a result of growing up without his father?

Once they have written a paragraph defending Telemachus, have the students write a second paragraph from the perspective of Telemachus. This can be structured as a journal entry from the night before, speaking to the Ithacans and suitors. Telemachus has been escorted to the tower by his old nurse, Euryclea. Now he cannot sleep, having spoken to the goddess Athene. What is he thinking?